

Fire Safety Information & Tips

Several years ago, a number of NC Forestry Service firefighters responded to the tragic wildfires in Oakland, CA, where several hundred homes were destroyed by fire. Shortly after their return to North Carolina, representatives were invited by the Dare County office of the NCFS to take a look at Southern Shores. Their assessment was eye opening and brought to light what should be a major concern to everyone who lives in the Town of Southern Shores; the fire load in Southern Shores is much greater than in Oakland. Should a major fire break out, as we are seeing on TV every day all over the U.S., there could be tragic consequences?

In the fire service, we exist in what is known as "wildland / urban interface"; that is, where people decide to build homes and business in heavily wooded areas or in areas with high vegetative growth. Southern Shores compounds the problem with highly flammable vegetation . . . beautiful to look at, but highly flammable, such as wax myrtle, pine trees, and pampas grass. It is necessary, then, to follow some simple safety tips to prevent catastrophic fires and/or to minimize the potential damage should there be a fire.

Fire prevention and responding to fire calls is a coordinated effort between the Southern Shores Volunteer Fire Department, Town of Southern Shores, NC Forestry Service, and every individual living or visiting in Southern Shores. Every weekday, the NCFS assesses the fire potential across the state, and issues a "Readiness Plan" number that is broadcast to all fire departments. The advisory ranges from RP-1, little or no chance of fire occurring (think hurricane conditions) to RP-7, extreme fire conditions (think dry, drought conditions). The latest advisory is a RP-5, severe fire conditions. We have seen very little rain in several weeks, and are near drought conditions. This makes for all vegetation to be an excellent fuel source and easy ignited. Combined with the humidity and wind conditions, there is a high possibility of a wildland fire that can be intense and fast moving.

The Southern Shores Volunteer Fire Department is acutely aware of the situation and is constantly alert to a fire or possible fire threats. As well, specialized equipment and your volunteer firefighters are on call 24 hours a day to quickly respond to a call.

Every citizen should make a concerted effort to do their part to protect their home, property, and the areas of their neighbors. Some fire safety tips follow, as well as links to get more information/tips. You can also call or stop by the SSVFD and talk with a firefighter or request assistance in assessing your home, or other safety tips.

IN CASE OF FIRE . . . DIAL 9-1-1

- * Clear 30' around your home
- * Remove "ladder fuels" . . that is, vegetation or trellises where fire can quickly go up heights
- * Remove underbrush and low limbs; dead vegetation material
- * Store firewood away from your home

- * Refuel garden equipment carefully and safely
- * Store/use flammable liquids carefully and safely
- * Mark driveway clearly that can easily found by emergency responders . . . Consider buying a reflective address sign from SSVFD
- * DO NOT conduct any outdoor burns without a proper permit the Town fire Inspector
- * Charcoal or woodchip grilling . . . do not grill on a wood deck; let ashes cool for 48 hours, wrap cold ashes in aluminum foil and dispose of in a non-combustible container
- * Do not grill in a garage, indoors, in a breezeway, or under a combustible area
- * If you can't wait 48 hours to properly dispose of ashes, let the ashes cool, place in aluminum foil, thoroughly soak in water, and then dispose of in a non-combustible container.
- * Do not attempt to move a hot grill
- * Keep all flammable liquids a safe distance from a hot grill/coal
- * Never leave a hot grill unattended
- * When using a grill, have a fire extinguisher on hand, or at least a garden hose or bucket of sand

Links for information:

<http://firewise.org>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml97/97128.html>

<http://hpba.org/consumer/bbq/safety.shtml>

Doug Brannon, Lt.

SSVFD Public Information Officer